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SUBJECT: MDG CALL TO ACTION: MORE UK THINKING

REF: 07 LONDON 4389 (NOTAL)

¶1. (SBU) Summary: In recent meetings at DFID and FCO, UK interlocutors raised PM Brown's Millennium Development Goals (MDG) Call to Action. We were told the Call to Action is intended mesh with existing development initiatives, but bring in a private sector component that the others lack. More details will be forthcoming once the UN announces that it will host the envisioned September 2008 meeting. In addition, the UK is pursuing the MDG concept via a planned spring private sector conference in the UK, EC consultations, and discussions with the Japanese in the G-8 context. End Summary.

What is the Call to Action?  
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¶2. (SBU) According to UK interlocutors, the Call to Action is intended to reinvigorate progress on the MDGs )- and bring in a private sector component that has not been included previously. Ian McKendry, head of DFID's MDG Call to Action Team said that including a wide range of private-sector actors is what differentiates the Call to Action from other development initiatives. In fact, he called this approach the Call to Action's USP, or Unique Selling Point, which he said is a popular private sector term that DFID is using in its thinking. Asked to define the Call to Action, McKendry said it aims to bring in a wide range of stakeholders and initiate new actions to get the MDGs back on track.

¶3. (SBU) In a separate meeting at FCO, Nick Bridge, Head of FCO's Global Economy Group, stressed that it is important to generate momentum on the MDGs, not just within governments, but more broadly. He added that the UK definitely does not want the Call to Action to become a process.

¶4. (SBU) Bridge also wanted to ensure that the envisioned September 2008 MDG Call to Action event is linked in with the existing aid effectiveness agenda, including upcoming EU Council meetings in June, the G-8 Summit in Japan in July, and the December Financing For Development meeting in Doha. (Note: Bridge was not aware of the September Accra meeting on the Paris Declaration, but this event is on DFID's list of upcoming meetings it needs to link in with the Call to Action.) McKendry also stressed the MDG focus as part of the broader development agenda, including other UK priorities such as the development of education sector plans and the International Health Partnership.

Who is in Charge?  
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¶5. (SBU) McKendry said that the UK has been working closely

with the UN to determine where to house the initiative at the UN. The choice is between UNDP and the SYG's office. DFID is lobbying for the SYG's office to take responsibility. Bridge also envisioned that the SYG's office would take responsibility.

¶6. (SBU) McKendry said the UN should make an announcement by the end of January about the September conference. Bridge said SYG Ban Ki-moon would make the announcement in a speech.

This announcement would provide a focal point for further discussions to shape the MDG initiative in practice. Bridge reinforced this, noting that the UK is currently in a bit of a "holding pattern" on the Call to Action since it has "some plans" but wants the UN to lead and shape the proposed September 2008 event.

¶7. (SBU) Within HMG, responsibility for the Call to Action is shifting within DFID. Sarah Kline has joined the MDG Call to Action team at DFID, and will take over as head of the two-person team by the end of January when Ian McKendry departs on a year-long leave of absence. Also, the entire team has been shifted from the Global Development Effectiveness division of DFID to the division that deals with EU and Donor (G-8) Relations. FCO told us that DFID has the lead on Call to Action issues.

What's Next?

¶8. (SBU) Chris Carter from DFID's Call to Action team, who participated in the FCO meeting, told us the UK, likely the PM's office, will host a private sector event in late April/early May to discuss ways the private sector can use

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its existing business structures (as opposed to just donating funds) to help developing countries achieve the MDGs. This links in with the 21 companies that have signed the MDG Declaration. (Reftel outlines some of DFID Parliamentary Under Secretary and State Shriti Vadera's efforts in this area).

¶9. (SBU) Bridge said the UK has been working closely in the EU context and that the EU is "keen" to include the MDG focus in the June European Council report. To trigger discussion within the EU, Carter said DFID will be doing a report to the European Council in the March-April timeframe which will celebrate successes toward achieving the MDGs, but also look at what more needs to be done.

¶10. (SBU) Bridge said that the UK has been working closely with the Japanese and that Japan wants to use MDGs as a hook for development issues at this year's G-8 Summit in July.

¶11. (SBU) McKendry told us that Australia, New Zealand and Denmark had expressed an interest in becoming signatories to the MDG Declaration and that UK Secretary of State for International Development Douglas Alexander had spoken to the new Australian government representatives at the December 17 Palestinian donors' conference in Paris. McKendry said the UK plans to arrange a signing event in early 2008.

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